

What is claimed is:

1. A method for forming individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers comprising the steps of:

applying an effective amount of a crosslinking agent in the presence of an effective amount of a polyol to a mat of cellulosic fibers,

separating the mat into substantially individualized fibers,

drying the treated individualized fibers,

curing the crosslinking agent in the presence of the polyol to form individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers,

wherein the Whiteness Index, ( $WI_{(CDM-L)}$ ), of the individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers is greater than about 69.0.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein the crosslinking agent is an  $\alpha$ -hydroxy polycarboxylic acid.

3. The method of Claim 2 wherein the crosslinking agent is selected from the group consisting of malic acid, tartaric acid, citric acid, tartronic acid,  $\alpha$ -hydroxyglutaric acid, and citramalic acid and mixtures thereof.

3. The method of Claim 3 wherein the crosslinking agent is citric acid.

4. The method of Claim 3 wherein the crosslinking agent is malic acid.

5. The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is selected from the group consisting of acyclic polyols, alicyclic polyols and heterosides and mixtures thereof.

6. The method of Claim 5 wherein the alicyclic polyol is selected from the group consisting of erythritol, xylitol, arabinitol, ribitol, sorbitol, mannitol, perseitol, and volemmitol and mixtures thereof.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the acyclic polyol is sorbitol.

8. The method of Claim 5 wherein the alicyclic polyol is myo-Inositol.

9. The method of Claim 5 wherein the heteroside is selected from the group consisting of isomalt, lactitol, and maltitol or mixtures thereof.

10. The method of Claim 9 wherein the heteroside is maltitol.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the heteroside is lactitol.

12. The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is applied to the cellulose mat the application of the crosslinking agent.

13. The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is applied to the crosslink treated individualized fibers before curing.